



## State Representative **Mark Miloscia**



Winter 2002

### **Olympia Office:**

PO Box 40600  
319 John L. O'Brien Building  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7898

### **E-mail:**

miloscia\_ma@leg.wa.gov

### **Committees:**

- State Government - *Vice Chair*
- Children & Family Services
- Financial Institutions & Insurance
- Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee (JLARC)
- Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program Committee (LEAP)

Dear Neighbors,

In light of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on our nation, and subsequent economic downturn, this year's legislative session is more important than ever as we focus on keeping Washington state safe and revitalizing our region's economy during this national recession.

As the session begins, we are faced with some tough questions regarding our state's transportation problems, economic health and the safety of our communities. This will be a challenging session, but I am confident that we will develop viable solutions to these critical issues.

In addition, our state budget requires revamping. Drastic cuts must be made in order to balance the budget. Governor Locke has proposed a new budget, which we will be closely examining during the coming weeks. As we proceed with balancing the budget, it is important that we be careful not to hurt our state's most vulnerable citizens- children, the elderly, the disabled, and low-income families.

As you read about the key issues this session, I encourage you to share your thoughts with me by completing the comments section at the end of this newsletter. Together we can come up with real solutions to protect our community and get our economy moving again.

Sincerely,

Mark Miloscia

# **A Report to the 30th District**

# State Representative **Mark Miloscia**

## **MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE ACCOUNTABLE**

### **Setting Benchmarks**

My top priority this legislative session is to pass a measure requiring performance audits of all state and local government agencies. The measure will identify areas of government inefficiency and offer methods to help government restructure itself to be more accountable to the public it serves. Most importantly, this proposal will save taxpayers money. Recent elections have made it clear that increased accountability and efficiency by government is what the public demands.

Last year, I offered a similar pilot proposal that passed the Legislature, but was vetoed by the governor due to concerns about the role of the state auditor. However, with our current budget pinch, I am more optimistic that same proposal will succeed. At this time of extremely tight budgets, performance audits are more important than ever before. As we consider cutting numerous programs ranging from the state library to services that our senior citizens depend on, it is crucial that we look at ways to save money and invest in the most effective programs.

### **Reducing Regulations, Boosting our Economy**

Some of our efforts to streamline state government are now paying off. Under a plan implemented by Governor Locke in 1997, state agencies have now finished repealing more than 8,000 rules and have re-written some 9,000 of the 28,776 rules in plainer English, making them more useful to the general public. In total, 2,400 pages of the Washington Administrative Code have been axed due to not meeting the criteria of need, reasonableness, effectiveness, clarity, fairness, and consistency with legislative intent and statutory authority — a significant improvement in the way our state government works.

Still, this effort needs to be expanded. Regulations at many agencies outside the governor's control or in various local governments still need to be streamlined and improved.

## **GETTING OUR STATE MOVING AGAIN**

As I look to require all of state government to undergo performance audits during the coming years, I will be paying particularly close attention to the Department of Transportation (DOT). So, as we try again to address our transportation problems, I will introduce performance audit reforms that will ensure that DOT is performing efficiently. Anything less is unacceptable.

It is also critical that we make sure that transportation tax dollars stay in the communities that provide them. Pierce County and King County put in more transportation tax money than they receive in transportation spending. For example, taxpayers in King County are currently subsidizing roads and highways in rural counties that do not have nearly the traffic problems that exist in our area. For every dollar King County taxpayers pay in gas tax, they only get back 86 cents. However, Ferry County in rural Northeastern Washington gets \$9.45 for every dollar they pay in gas tax. I will also be looking to address this issue of fairness as we prepare to tackle our transportation problems.

We must develop a solution to our traffic problems, and it must be done soon. I hope that by the time you receive this, we will have succeeded in passing several measures that improve the way DOT operates. DOT needs to demonstrate the necessary efficiency to complete projects that motorists want with the accountability that taxpayers deserve.



## **THE BUDGET CRUNCH: HOW WE GOT HERE**

We had no idea how drastically our budget situation would change this year when those four planes crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in western Pennsylvania. During those moments, our nation's sense of security and our economy took an unprecedented hit. Prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, we were expecting a short economic downturn

# A Report to the 30th District

followed by strong economic growth in the year 2003. After the attacks, Boeing almost immediately announced layoffs that could affect as many as 30,000 employees. These and other layoffs have had a tremendous negative effect on our economy and state budget.

The latest revenue forecasts estimate that we will lose \$813 million in expected revenue through July 2003. In addition, we face increased expenses including higher numbers of students in state schools, increased caseloads for the Department of Social & Health Services, high firefighting costs from the past summer, and expensive lawsuits against the state. The combination of these factors means the operating budget will likely fall short by \$1.25 billion. Balancing the budget will require some deep cuts.

## THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSAL

On December 18<sup>th</sup>, the governor unveiled his proposed 2002 Supplemental Budget that addresses the \$1.25 billion budget gap. Changes to the current budget will include:

- New budget reductions of \$566 million
- New revenue increases of \$166 million
- Additional money transfers of \$250 million
- \$222 million from reserve funds

## Budget Cuts

The proposed budget reductions include \$235 million in cuts from social and health services. The major changes will include a decline of Medicaid payments to pharmacies and assisted living facilities, lower payments to nursing homes, a fewer community mental health services, and diminished funding for several programs designed to serve at-risk youth.

Several other cost-saving measures consist of requiring state employees to pay more of their health insurance premiums, trimming higher education funding (while allowing public schools to raise their own tuition), cutting some funding from several K-12 grant programs, and eliminating the Washington State Library.

## Revenue Increases

The governor's budget also suggests several revenue increases including an increase in taxes on card rooms, pull-tabs, punchboards, and liquor. Additionally, the governor recommends that the state join the "Big Game" multi-state lottery, a proposal that could generate \$25 million for the state.

At the Legislature, we are now charged with reviewing the governor's proposed plan, altering it where appropriate, and passing a budget into law. Many legislators are deeply concerned about some of the governor's proposed cuts. Some of these cuts will go too far in impacting the lives of our most vulnerable citizens. With your help, we will try to make the necessary cuts in a manner that does not harm children, the disabled, the elderly, and low-income families.

## COMMENTS

Please use this space to write comments about any issues or concerns you may have.

Dear Rep. Miloscia,

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Please cut out and send your comments to:

**Rep. Mark Miloscia**  
**P.O. Box 40600**  
**Olympia, WA 98504-0600**

Sincerely,

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

# State Representative **Mark Miloscia**

## LOCAL SCHOOLS EARN AWARDS FOR READING IMPROVEMENTS

In recent years we have passed several reforms asking a lot of our elementary schools. We are pleased to say that many of our local schools have responded. One important benchmark that we sought at the Legislature was for schools to achieve a 25% reduction in the number of 4<sup>th</sup> graders that failed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning test for reading within three years. These schools have made great strides through the efforts of teachers, administrators, staff, and of course, students and parents.

This session we will push for reforms that specifically target poor-performing schools for improvement. We are convinced that real, effective education accountability that gives more authority to local districts while demanding better performance will be a boon for students, educators and taxpayers alike. Among our top priorities is an effort to encourage parents and community members to become more involved in the activities of our schools.

We will also be working to improve safety in the classroom and on the playground – not just from natural or man-made disasters, but from the bullying and malicious harassment that currently ruin the school experience for too many students. Additionally, we remain committed to the idea that school bond and levy elections should be decided the way other elections are: with 50 percent plus one vote.

**Below is a list of some of the schools in and around our community that have earned the Award of Reading Achievement this year.**

### **Tacoma School District:**

Franklin  
Sheridan  
Northeast Tacoma  
Stanley  
Downing  
Lister  
Lowell  
Reed  
Browns Point  
Whitman  
De Long  
Mann  
Grant  
Bryant  
Seward  
Whittier  
Boze  
Jefferson

### **Fife School District:**

Endeavour Inter

### **Federal Way School District:**

Lakeland  
Olympic View  
Camelot  
Sunnycrest  
Lake Grove  
Nautilus  
Mark Twain  
Twin Lakes  
Brigadoon  
Rainier View  
Meredith Hill

### **Auburn School District:**

Terminal Park  
Dick Scobee  
Pioneer  
Lea Hill  
Evergreen Heights  
Alpac  
Lakeview  
Ilalko

